



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB ROTATION PRACTICES AND
EMPLOYEE CAREER DEVELOPMENT AMONG PRODUCTION
WORKERS IN JAPANESE COMPANIES IN MALAYSIA**

MD LAZIM BIN MOHD ZIN

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EMPLOYEE CAREER DEVELOPMENT AMONG PRODUCTION
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By

MD LAZIM BIN MOHD ZIN

**Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School of Management, Universiti Putra
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Science**

December 2003



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

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Chairman: Raduan Che Rose, Ph.D.

Faculty: Graduate School Of Management

This study investigated the relationship between job rotation practices and employee career development prospects among production workers of Japanese electronic companies in Malaysia. It examines the extent to which job rotation practices are significant to career development outcomes that are career progression, knowledge and skill and career management. A model of job rotation developed by Campion, Cheraskin and Stevens (1994) was used as the premise to test the linear relationship between job rotation and employee career development in the workplace. This is done by analyzing survey-based data sets particularly obtained from samples of 209 production workers in Japanese electronic manufacturing companies in Malaysia. The Pearson Correlation was used to measure the association between the variables and to test the research hypotheses. The results of the study found that there were significant correlation between job rotation practices and employee perception towards three career development outcomes, namely, career progression, knowledge and skill and job rotation benefits. Job rotation is considered as an important on-the-job training and the emphasis on this practice should be made in order to ensure all

employees participating in the job rotation could enjoy various experiences, knowledge and skills valuable to their career development in the future.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi sebahagian keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**HUBUNGAN ANTARA AMALAN PENGILIRAN KERJA DAN
PEMBAGUNAN KERJAYA PEKERJA DI KALANGAN PEKERJA
PENGELUARAN DI SYARIKAT JEPUN DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

MD LAZIM BIN MOHD ZIN

Disember 2003

Pengerusi: Raduan Che Rose, Ph.D.

Fakulti: Sekolah Pengajian Siswazah Pengurusan

Kajian ini mengenalpasti hubungan di antara amalan penggiliran kerja dan pembangunan kerjaya pekerja di kalangan pekerja-pekerja pengeluaran di syarikat elektronik Jepun di Malaysia. Kajian ini meneliti hubungan di antara amalan penggiliran kerja dengan pembangunan kerjaya seperti pengembangan kerjaya, perolehan ilmu dan kemahiran dan pengurusan kerjaya. Model amalan penggiliran kerja yang dihasilkan oleh Campion, Cheraskin dan Stevens (1994) digunakan sebagai asas untuk menguji hubungan langsung di antara penggiliran kerja dan pembangunan kerjaya pekerja. Ianya dilakukan dengan menganalisis maklumat yang diperolehi daripada 209 pekerja pengeluaran di syarikat pembuatan elektronik Jepun di Malaysia. Ujian korelasi Pearson telah digunakan untuk mengukur hubung-kait antara pembolehubah-pembolehubah dan untuk menguji hipotesis kajian.

Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa adanya hubungan signifikan di antara penggiliran kerja dengan pembangunan kerjaya iaitu pengembangan kerjaya, perolehan ilmu dan kemahiran dan persepsi pekerja terhadap faedah penggiliran kerja. Keseluruhannya,

amalan penggiliran kerja dilihat sebagai satu amalan penting *on-the-job training* dan penekanan yang sewajarnya harus diberikan dalam usaha memastikan para pekerja yang terlibat dalam penggiliran kerja memperolehi pengalaman, pengetahuan dan kemahiran yang berguna untuk pembangunan kerjaya mereka pada masa hadapan.

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I certify that an Examination Committee met on 27th October, 2003 to conduct the final examination of **Md Lazim B. Mohd Zin** on his **Master of Science** thesis entitled “**The Relationship between Job Rotation Practices and Employee Career Development among Production Workers in Japanese Companies in Malaysia**” in accordance with Universiti Putra Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Putra Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

Arfah Salleh, Ph.D.

Associate Professor
Graduate School of Management
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Jamilah Othman, Ph.D.

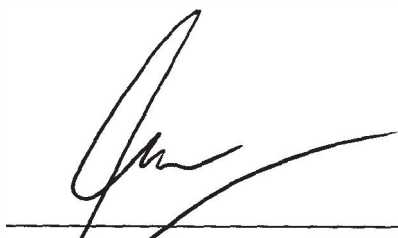
Lecturer
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(External Examiner)

Khairuddin Idris, Ph.D.

Lecturer
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Raduan Che Rose, Ph.D.

Lecturer
Graduate School of Management
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Representative of Supervisory
Committee/Observer)



ARFAH SALLEH, Ph.D.
Associate Professor/Deputy Dean
Graduate School of Management
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 19/02/04

This thesis submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee are as follows:

Raduan Che Rose, Ph.D.

Lecturer

Graduate School of Management

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Chairman)

Azizi Ali Ibrahim, Ph.D.

Lecturer

Faculty of Economic and Management

Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Member)



ZAINAL ABIDIN KIDAM

Associate Professor/Dean

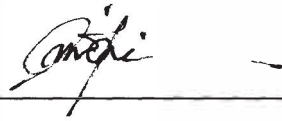
Graduate School of Management

Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 11/03/04

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations, which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or currently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



MD LAZIM BIN MOHD ZIN

Date: 27/12/2003

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CTDs	Cumulative Trauma Disorders
HRM	Human Resource Management
JETRO	Japan External Trade Organisation
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
R&D	Research and Development
TMT	Top Management Team

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Career development systems in the organisation make use of a variety of career development interventions due to the differences in employee career needs and varying in the career development resources available to them (Schlossberg, 1997). The most widely used career development interventions include assessment centers, career coaching/counseling, cross-training, flexitime, job enlargement, job enrichment, job rotation, job sharing, sabbaticals and temporary assignments (Kirk et al., 2000; Olorunsola, 2000; Thamhain, 1992). Job rotation as a career development intervention was given emphasis in the 1960s and 70s. Numerous firms have used job rotation as a tool to motivate employees by providing task variety and enhancing employee socialisation (Susan, 1996). Job rotation also gives the employer the flexibility to adjust to the client needs and to achieve many different human resource objectives (Campion and Cheraskin, 1996; Sullivan and Au, 1998).

The value of job rotation has long been espoused in promoting employee learning, career satisfaction and interpersonal collaboration effectiveness (Campion et al, 1994; London, 1983), however no clear link to manufacturing practices has been made to examine employee perception towards job rotation especially on the Japanese style management practices. According to Cosgel and Micely (2000), many Japanese firms are well known for their practice of job rotation and their contribution to the success of many Japanese firm activities. Although little prior research has been done in this field, it had been widely assumed that job rotation

provides employees with opportunities to excel in their career, skills and abilities in the organisation (Campion et al., 1994; Ortega, 1999; Rose, 1999; Olorunsola, 2000; Eriksson and Ortega, 2001). Researchers and practitioners have long recognized the value of work assignments and work experience as a source of career development (Tesluk and Jacobs, 1998; Howard and Bray, 1988; McCall et al., 1988).

With regard to job rotation practices among Malaysian production workers, a study by Raduan (2002) reported that job rotation is one of the important training practices for all levels of employees in Japanese firms especially among production and general workers in Japanese electronic companies in Malaysia. According to Lai Wan (2001), job rotation is also a common practice among production workers in Malaysian auto manufacturing. Unfortunately, their findings show that job rotation is not properly managed in the workplace, remains disconnected with employee training and development prospects and implemented without the intention to enhance employees' knowledge.

Campion et al. (1994) pioneered the study of job rotation by relating employee career development to job rotation which shows that job rotation increases employee experience. They examined the employee career background that may lead to participation in job rotation practices and in association with employee career development outcomes. Guthrie and Olian (1991) supported the notion that work experience is related to executive work adjustment, career opportunities, personal development, learning, changes in abilities, attitudes and motivation.

1.1 Problem Statement

Past researchers have addressed some justification and practical recommendations when considering job rotation in organisations. For instance, job rotation could be used as a means of employee career development, employee motivation and useful for downsized organisation (Campion and Cheraskin, 1996). According to Parker (2001), job rotation might be particularly appropriate for some circumstances such as the problems of skill shortages and long-term unemployment.

The importance of incorporating employee career development needs and expectation into workplace training cannot be overemphasized. For the production and general workers, job rotation is commonly stated as a mechanism to avoid worker boredom and fatigue (Raduan, 2002; Miller et al. 1973), to examine ergonomic issues (Taha et al., 1999) and to reduce cumulative trauma disorders (CTDs) (Kuijeu, 1999; Hazzard and Mautz, 1992). Even though a great deal of studies have addressed the issues of job rotation from specific areas of human resources management field as stated above, only a few studies have investigated the influences of job rotation practices on employee career development in the workplace (Campion et al. 1994; Ortega, 1999).

However, there has been no attempt to examine the issue of job rotation and its relationship to employee career development especially among workers in Japanese manufacturing companies. Only limited research on the practice of job rotation in organisations have been conducted in Malaysia (Raduan, 2002; Lai Wan, 2001). For instance, Lai Wan (2001) studied to what extent job rotation is introduced and practiced in Malaysian auto manufacturing companies. Raduan (2002) focused on

the job rotation as one of the key elements of employee training and development systems. There is a gap in the existing literature on job rotation in the Malaysian context, thus, in this study, uses the job rotation model published by Campion et al. (1994) to provide a basis for examining the influence of job rotation on production worker perception towards career development prospects which are career progression, knowledge and skills enhancement and career management.

Eriksson and Ortega (2001) noted that previous research on job rotation that has been conducted at one firm at a time (Campion et al., 1994; Kusunoki and Numagami, 1998). As suggested by Susan (1996), studies on this issue deserve a long term view of the effects of job rotation on employee career development at many firms instead of one. The present study attempts to respond to this argument by examining the effects of job rotation on production worker career enhancement in many Japanese manufacturing companies in Malaysia.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1.2.1 General Objectives

In general, this research presents and examines the conceptual model that identifies the relationship between existing job rotation practices in the workplace and employee perceptions towards career development outcomes among production workers in Japanese electronic companies in Malaysia. It is purported that the job rotation being practiced has an influence on employee perceptions towards career development outcomes. Thus, in turn, the study focuses on how the job rotation

practices influenced their perception towards career progression, knowledge and skills and career management.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

More specifically, the main objective of this study is to examine the extent of employee perception towards job rotation practices and employee career development through:

- i. determining the relationship between job rotation practices and employee perception towards career progression outcomes;
- ii. determining the relationship between job rotation practices and employee perception towards knowledge and skills outcomes;
and
- iii. determining the relationship between job rotation practices and employee perception towards career management outcomes

1.3 Research Questions

In order to address the objectives of this research, the main research questions addressed by this research are:

- i. Is there a significant correlation between job rotation practices and employee perception towards career progression outcomes?
- ii. Is there a significant correlation between job rotation practices and employee perception towards knowledge and skills outcomes in the workplace?

- iii. Is there a significant correlation between job rotation practices and employee perception towards career management (benefits and costs) outcomes?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is conducted to enhance the understanding of job rotation intervention as identified in the various fields of human resources management literature such as career development, socialisation, executive development, knowledge management and employee plateau. For this study, emphasis is given to examining the relationship between job rotation practices and employee perceptions towards career development prospects. The finding of this research will contribute to the manufacturing firms in several theoretical and managerial ways.

Firstly, this research will enhance the understanding of the job rotation practices and career development outcomes, which, will provide an expansion in the scope of workplace learning. The results of this research will expose the essential impact of employee career background on employee interest to participate in job rotation practices in organisation. This understanding will translate into an increased understanding of the relationship between job rotation practices among production workers in Japanese companies and their career development outcomes.

Secondly, the present research is conducted to provide manufacturing industry managers and employees with insights into job rotation as a medium for career development interventions. Briefly, to show how to manage employees career using job rotation and how to draw positive value of employee towards career development

within an organisation. Thus, the present research will help human resource practitioners to understand how to develop job rotation programs in the organisations and also to assist the top management to establish successful planning for preparing firms in the future through utilization of its human capital.

Thirdly, this research will contribute to the body of knowledge and enhance the understanding of the job rotation as one of the management practices that contributes toward knowledge and skills creation. Thus, in turn, the results will help managers and employees have a clear understanding of exactly which knowledge and skills is enhanced by placing an employee into a job rotation. Also, this situation can help employees to have a good understanding of the factors that affect their future position in the organisation. Essentially, this study may also contribute to help managers in addressing any career development outcomes that are not enhanced by job rotation through other employee development mechanisms such as specific training programs and management coaching.

Finally, a few studies have already examined the issues of job rotation practices related to employee career development outcomes in other industry settings (Campion et al., 1994; Ortega, 1999; Kusunoki and Numagami, 1998; Cosgel and Miceli, 2000). Thus, this research in the Japanese manufacturing setting could offer a new context to test existing evidence and provide new insights into the area of job rotation practices.

1.5 Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined as a mean to provide specific meanings for usage throughout the study:

Job rotation - Any change in job title/functions or lateral transfer of employees between jobs within an organisation and rotated employees do not remain on jobs permanently (Campion et al., 1994).

Career Development - The process for achieving specific employee and organisation goals, including providing career information to employees and helping employees identify advancement opportunities (Kirk et al., 2000).

Career progression – The process of the development of employees along the path of experience, skill, ability and jobs within the organisations (Yehuda, 1996).

Promotion opportunity – The probability that an individual employee will be able to occupy roles along with a commensurate increase in responsibility and pay within an organisation (Marian et al., 1995; Allen, 1997).

Career management – The problem-solving process in which individuals gather information on their own likes, dislikes, strengths, weaknesses, needs, values, talents and aspirations about their world of work to help them make career decision making (Uzoamaka et al., 2000; London and Mone, 1988). In the present study, career management refers to the employee perception towards the benefits and costs of job rotation practices in the organisation.

1.6 Organisation of the Research

The thesis is organised into five chapters. **Chapter I** covers the current research in the area of the practice of job rotation. Firstly, it highlights the importance of understanding the relationship between job rotation and employee career development among workers in Japanese companies. Some information regarding the research to be carried out is also discussed which includes the problem statement, the objectives and the significance to both practitioners and academicians.

Chapter II provides a review of the literature relevant to job rotation and its influence to employee career development. It first reviews the concepts of job rotation and its implementation and adoption in various areas of human resources management. Emphasis is also given to the effects of job rotation on three indicators of career development, which are career progression, knowledge and skills and career management.

Chapter III presents a conceptual model, a detailed discussion of the research design, the research hypotheses to be tested and the determination of sample size. The discussion on the conceptual model focuses upon the model of job rotation developed by Campion et al. (1994), and includes the variables of interest to be tested. The chapter also discusses the research design that is used in the study. This includes its nature of quantitative study, its cross-sectional approach and a justification of employee as a unit of analysis. This chapter also briefly discusses the use of stratified random sampling technique in determining the sample size.